Sir John Woolf (producer) 15/3/13-28/6/99

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BIOGRAPHY The son of powerful film distributor and producer CM Woolf, John Woolf entered the film industry as a teenager, translating subtitles for his father's company the W&F Film Service. In 1949 he and his younger brother James Woolf (1919-1966) formed Independent Film Distributors. Losing money, they decided to move into production by forming Romulus Films. Orientated towards the international market, the company experienced success from the outset with The African Queen (1951) and Moulin Rouge (1953), both directed by John Huston. In 1959 the brothers gambled on an adaptation of John Braine's novel Room at the Top. It's success pointed to Woolf's eye for popular fiction, as did his adaptation of Frederick Forsyth's first novel, The Day of the Jackal (1973). His film version of Oliver! (1968), perhaps the biggest musical ever produced in Britain, was more popular still. In 1959 Woolf became a founding director of Anglia Television. Focussing particularly on drama, he produced over 100 episodes of Tales of the Unexpected. SUMMARY In this valuable and entertaining interview with Roy Fowler, Woolf talks first of all about the career of his father, CM Woolf, and the two companies he operated, the W&F Film Service and General Film Distributors. Moving on to his own career, he discusses his experiences working with Gabriel Pascal to promote Pygmalion (1939) and his subsequent work producing training films with the Army Kinema Service during WWII. A great deal of detail is provided about Woolf's high profile career in the 1950s and 1960s, including his experiences working with John Huston, Sam Spiegel. His troubles with the BBFC and cinema exhibitors during the release of Room at the Top are particularly interesting. Finally, Woolf reveals the number of award won by his films, a feat that underlines his massive and largely undervalued status in the British film industry.

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